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Senate President Tom Lee and House Speaker Allan Bense Announce the Formation of the Joint Select Committee on Hurricane Insurance

Tallahassee, Fla. – Senate President Tom Lee and House Speaker Allan Bense today announced the formation of the Joint Select Committee on Hurricane Insurance.

The Joint Select Committee is charged with studying aspects of the residential insurance market in light of the potential \$20 billion in losses from the 2004 storms which has provided a serious challenge to maintaining a viable private sector market and to keeping premium increases to a bare minimum.

In December, the Florida Legislature called a Special Session to address issues relating to unforeseen and unaffordable expenses to residential policyholders due to the impact of multiple hurricane deductibles. As a result, the Legislature passed a requirement that policies issued after May 1, 2005, have an annual hurricane deductible and provided tax relief to Floridians whose primary residences were destroyed by the hurricanes.

“In order to allow the Legislature to better study and evaluate these complex issues, the President and I are forming the Joint Select Committee on Hurricane Insurance to gather a broader base of knowledge and allow more public input than could be accomplished during the brief Special Session,” said Speaker Bense. “Today, we are continuing our commitment to finding innovative ways to calm Florida’s volatile home insurance market and increase the affordability and availability of property insurance for Florida homeowners.”

“Establishing this work group now will give us the opportunity to shine a light on important issues relating to hurricane insurance with a hope of bringing forth new ideas early in the Session,” said President Lee. “These issues are just too important to be pushed off to the final hectic days of the Regular Session. I believe this Legislature will have the opportunity to accomplish real reforms.”

Issues for the Joint Select Committee include:

- Further study of the issue of multiple deductibles; including analysis of the effect on premiums, particularly for condominium associations;
- Recommendations on the appropriate level of the retention rate and evaluation of options for ensuring proper funding of the Florida Hurricane Catastrophe Fund; and
- Exploration of options to reduce the size of Citizens Property Insurance Corporation, our state insurer of last resort, while providing coverage at a fair price to homeowners who have no other option for coverage.

Members of the Joint Select Committee are:

Senator Rudy Garcia, Co-Chair (R-Hialeah)
Senator J.D. Alexander (R- Lake Wales)
Senator Mike Haridopolos (R-Melbourne)
Senator Jeff Atwater (R-North Palm Beach)
Senator Carey Baker (R-Eustis)
Senator Skip Campbell (D- Ft. Lauderdale)
Senator Steve Geller (D-Hallandale)
Senator Al Lawson (D-Tallahassee)
Representative Leslie Waters, Co-Chair (R- Seminole)
Representative Kim Berfield (R-Clearwater)
Representative Adam Hasner (R-Delray Beach)
Representative Arthenia Joyner (D-Tampa)
Representative Will Kendrick (D-Carrabelle)
Representative Dave Murzin (R-Pensacola)
Representative Dennis Ross (R- Lakeland)
Representative Priscilla Taylor (D-Riviera Beach)

The Joint Select Committee will conduct an organizational workshop on Monday, January 10th from 5:30 – 6:00 p.m. to discuss procedural matters. The first substantive meeting is scheduled for Friday, January 14th from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The location of the meeting will be forthcoming and, as always, available on the legislative websites: www.flsenate.gov or www.myfloridahouse.gov.